



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, May 2, 2017

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The next "Alert" will appear on May 8 due to the Golden Week holiday in Japan.

HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK, NTV, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that a car crashed through the door of a hospital in Oita, with NHK saying that 5 people were injured. Fuji TV and TV Asahi led with reports that President Trump said during an interview with Bloomberg that he would meet with Kim Jong Un "under the right circumstances." Several networks also reported that President Trump and Prime Minister Abe spoke by phone on Monday, saying that it was unusual that the teleconference was not disclosed to media. The networks quoted a senior GOJ official as saying that such bilateral telephone conversations may be held more frequently in the future and may not be disclosed every time.

SECURITY

Japan eager to support U.S. military in exchange for security assurance on Senkakus

Kyodo reported on the "asset protection" mission carried out by MSDF helicopter carrier Izumo for the USNS Richard E. Byrd, noting that the U.S. military has been strongly hoping for Japan to perform such operations. The article said that by responding to the U.S. request, Japan was able to "return the favor" offered by the Trump administration when Vice President Pence reiterated the U.S. defense commitment to the Senkaku Islands in the speech he gave aboard the USS Ronald Reagan on April 19. Although the first-ever asset protection mission was not very complicated because it was carried out in peacetime for a supply ship, the report said the U.S. may demand similar MSDF support for other types of vessels, such as those equipped with acoustic sensors to detect

submarines, during "gray zone situations" that fall short of military conflicts. An unnamed senior MOD official said: "The risk cannot be ruled out that the SDF will be targeted by a U.S. enemy if the SDF's operations are further synchronized with those of the U.S. military."

GOJ, Okinawa to hold working-group meeting on Futenma relocation

Okinawa Times wrote that the GOJ and the governments of Okinawa Prefecture and Ginowan City are making final arrangements to hold by the end of this month a working-group meeting of the Council for Promoting the Alleviation of the Burden of Futenma Air Station. This will be the first time since last August for the council to hold a meeting. The prefecture plans to ask the central government to collect data on the number of takeoffs and landings by all types of aircraft at Futenma and reiterate its call on the GOJ to realize Futenma's closure within five years of its commitment in 2013 to former Governor Nakaima, who gave Tokyo permission to conduct landfill work at Henoko. The prefectural government carried out its own survey of the number of takeoffs and landings at Futenma for two months from February. The results of the survey showed that the average number of activities per day by aircraft other than the Osprey actually increased during the period when some of the Ospreys were conducting training outside the prefecture for the purpose of reducing the base-hosting burden on Okinawa.

- [**MSDF escorts U.S. Navy ship for 1st time under new security laws**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**Commentary: Japan-US alliance entering uncharted territory**](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [**Analysis: First U.S. ship protection mission a political message to North Korea**](#) (Mainichi)
- [**Further MSDF-U.S. Navy operational integration eyed after first U.S. asset protection mission**](#) (Yomiuri)
- [**Questions raised after Japan issues order to protect U.S. ships**](#) (The Mainichi)
- [**Analysis: Low-risk mission aimed at inuring public to SDF's new role**](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [**No official reaction from China on first MSDF "U.S. asset protection" mission**](#) (Mainichi)
- [**Editorial: MSDF to guard U.S. vessels with an eye on DPRK threat**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**Editorial: Is gov't rushing to set precedent by ordering MSDF to guard U.S. Navy ship?**](#) (The Mainichi)

- [Editorial: Is escorting U.S. vessel a necessary mission for Japan?](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [SDF's escort operation for U.S. vessel draws criticism](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Editorial: Tokyo Metro suspension not an overreaction](#) (Sankei)
- [Tokyo Metro gets flack for halting subway trains for North Korea missile launch](#) (The Japan Times)

INTERNATIONAL

USG official says THAAD system operational

NHK reported that a USG official disclosed to the network on Monday that the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, which the U.S. military is currently installing in South Korea to respond to North Korean ballistic missiles, is now operational although to a limited degree. According to the network, an X-band radar that can track ballistic missiles was installed on April 26. The network added that China is concerned that THAAD could be used against its military and is claiming that it could undermine the regional strategic balance. The network said China may further increase its opposition to the system. The network also reported that a Pentagon official said the USS Carl Vinson is currently operating with the South Korean navy in the Sea of Japan near the Korean Peninsula. In addition, the network said according to the U.S. Air Force, Pacific, two B-1 bombers that left a U.S. base in Guam on Monday flew over the Sea of Japan and South Korea, adding that the U.S. is set to continue to put military pressure on North Korea.

The network also reported that defense officials of Japan, the U.S., and South Korea held a videoconference this morning to share information on North Korea. The network said the officials strongly condemned any action by North Korea that threatens the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, and agreed to strengthen trilateral cooperation to ensure regional peace and security. The officials also reportedly confirmed the U.S.'s unyielding security commitment to Japan and South Korea.

U.S. group says North Korea has second SLBM launcher

NHK reported that a Johns Hopkins University group announced on Monday that analysis of satellite imagery of a shipyard in western North Korea taken on April 19 reveals a new SLBM launcher. The group pointed out that the discovery of the second launcher may indicate that the DPRK intends to accelerate its development of SLBMs, including developing more types of missiles. NTV carried a similar story.

- [Chinese troops near DPRK border learning Korean in preparation for refugee influx: source](#) (Yomiuri)

- [More transparency sought on nukes](#) (The Japan News)
- [Abduction Minister Kato departs for Europe to call for support for resolving abduction issue](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Ignoring international pressure risky for North Korea](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: Kim Jong Un](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)

ECONOMY

- [Differing motives complicate 'TPP 11'](#) (The Japan News)
- [Gov't to show map of potential final nuclear disposal sites in summer](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Fisheries Agency raises tuna catch limit for Nagasaki](#) (Mainichi)
- [Rising 'power harassment' scourge now affects 33% of workforce: survey](#) (The Japan Times)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on May 1](#) (Nikkei)
- [Yosano returns to bolster LDP](#) (The Japan News)
- [Referendum for constitutional revision to be conducted separately from election](#) (Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

- [49% say Trump administration will have negative impact on Japan's security, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)
- [93% say they are "concerned" about the security situation, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)
- [Highlights of the April 2017 Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll](#) (Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll Bulletin)
- [Most Japanese back permanent abdication system for emperors: \[Kyodo News\] survey](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Poll finds 89% value role of Constitution \[Yomiuri poll\]](#) (The Japan News)

- [Japan divided over revising Article 9 amid N. Korea threats: \[Kyodo News\] poll](#) (Kyodo News)

SOCIETY

- [Lax indoor smoking rules applied to top ranking ministry officials: Mainichi study](#) (The Mainichi)
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